197 systems of signs and ideograms which may be considered as a sort of
212 writing and the study of which is currently pursued. The system from which all the others supposedly stem, the glã glã zo, has 226 ideograms which, according to informants, summarize the knowledge of the
[202] Bambara (1). On the other hand, the Bamba use a numerical system

1. See. p. 21. This system and two of the ideograms, of which to designates the mash of boiled cereals and by extension nourishment in general, will be the object of a comment by M. Griaule and G. Dieterlen. "Signes graphiques des Soudanais. L'Homme. /Graphic signs of the Sudanese man/." Cahiers d'ethnologie, de géographie et de linguistique, Hermann (in press).

On certain types of writing observed among the Mandé and the Vai, see J. Février, Histoire de l'écriture /The History of Writing/, pp. 528-529.

based on twenty. Moreover, an analysis of the texts collected, some of them quoted in this essay, has brought to light an /xvi/ important number of words which, according to informants, belong to an ancient language of Mandingo origin, now used as liturgical language. It is not within the framework of this essay to present this material or to comment upon it, but it is appropriate to note that the study of this vocabulary would contribute to an understanding of religious thinking among the Bambara.

173 The Bambara have a rather clear idea of their early history and even of their prehistory. They describe their ancestors with precision and know the phases of development of their technology. These premises are necessary to an understanding of their religion which, like the other institutions, is especially linked to this technological development. Moreover, the only observable remains comprise household furniture and utensils, transient but perennial material whose forms and ornamentation indicate the metaphysical principles on which their way of thinking is based.

177 It is appropriate not to neglect those influences which have acted
121 upon the Bambara through their contacts with other Sudanese tribes

177
121
connected since ancient times with the Mediterranean basin (1). The

1. We wish to draw attention to M. P. M. Schuhl's point and his allusion: "The premises which we owe at present to investigations like those of M. Griaule would seem to call for new syntheses and provide curious terms of comparison. Indirect influence from Greek myths on Sudanese mythology is, furthermore, not impossible." Essai sur la formation de la pensée grecque /Essay on the Formation of Greek Thought/, Presses Universitaires de France, 2nd ed., 1949, p. xv.

M. Schuhl recalls, on the other hand, the resemblances proposed by M. A. Jeanmaire, between Greek facts and some African institutions considered as survivals of a proto-Mediterranean civilization (Couroi et courètes), Lille, 1939.

Mali empires, in particular, by encouraging the expansion of Islam have maintained a center in the heart of the Sudan, which has left traces in the social and religious institutions of the Bambara.

However, it is difficult, if not impossible, at the present time to make a historical presentation of this religion or even to consider the problem of influences. We have with us the last phase of this religion and we know its development only through myths which, furthermore, do not make it appear to be a system established very early; it seems to have developed slowly with various additions which were felt and expressed in the myths. On the other hand the present religions of the Sudanese seem national; they form separate entities among the Dogon (2) the Bozo, the Kouroumba /Kurumba/, the

2. See M. Griaule. Dieu d'eau /water god/.

Minianka, the Sonray /Sonhrai/, and the /xvii/ Mossi. However, it is necessary to bear in mind the fact that their systematic observation, undertaken a few years ago, has brought to light a common

177 substratum on which each tribe has grafted its original system. The
121 study of this substratum would help define the problem of origins and influences.

After this, we have at our disposal the support of philology and above all the advantage of seeing the Bambara live their beliefs and of discovering their myths in a crude but expressive material as well as in numerous rites. The observations made over a wide field of inquiry serve as the basis for the presentation of this religious system.

114 The Bambara have been for a long time the subject of articles and
121 works, of which we will give below a concise bibliography. The only author who, until now, has attempted to describe their beliefs as a system is L. Tauxier whose study of La Religion Bambara /Bambara religion/ takes into account to a large extent the works of the Abbé Henry and Ch. Monteil. However, through the descriptions of these different observers which are certainly conscientious, this religion appears as a composite of diverse and even inconsistent elements with no apparent link between them. Despite a uniform plan and a laudable absence of preconceived ideas, L. Tauxier has been unable to bring out the fundamental concepts of the people he observed.

In fact, the study of a present-day Negro religion runs into difficulties of various kinds stemming on the one hand from the necessity of going into the field and on the other hand from the largely esoteric character of the doctrine. These circumstances make this study essentially a work of discovery.

Indeed, Bambara religion, like all Sudanese religions, has an exoteric part, quite easily accessible, which observation conducted along scientific lines may reveal in detail. Rules of life admitted by all, beliefs openly professed, and public or private practices may be the object of detailed work. But this religion, like that of the neighboring peoples, rests upon a doctrine whose fundamental principles
[609] are known to elders and initiates who show considerable aversion to confiding in strangers, particularly whites. Such a situation explains the ignorance in which scholarship has remained for so long concerning the religious way of thinking of this people (1).

812 1. The Bambara themselves distinguish between two kinds of knowledge. The first, called doni fyẽma "knowledge (which has) wind" /xviii/ is superficial

845 [431] Everyone visits the parents' home and takes to them what gifts one can give for to give to twins is equivalent to giving to Faro.

845 553 851 The name-giving ceremony is carried out on the river bank if the village is situated close to the Niger, or otherwise on the edge of a pond. The children are brought by their parents who, between them, represent the number seven. They are bathed, their hair shaved off and thrown into the river, while the father says: "Mother Faro, your sons are born, here is their hair." (1) He then gives the cotton band,

1. Ba faro i wolo dew kunsi ye nin ye.

dyala, which was worn by the mother to the officiant who encircles the child's forehead with it while saying: "These two people are older than I am; let the nyama of the name which is to be given them leave with the dyala." (2) Then he gives them a special name. (3)

2. Nin ma fla ka koro u ma, u čua dali nyama ka ta fini disa fẽw dyala fe.

3. Séni and Sinè for boys; Bintou and Wasa for girls. Among the Islamized Bambara this custom is also respected; the names given are always Alassan and Fouséni. This is most likely a distortion of the Arab names given to twins in Morocco.

● [177]

845 851 The next day, carrying one of the children and accompanied by a woman in charge of the other, the mother goes begging for millet or cotton in the village. She holds two identical spoon gourds in her hands. The gifts, equal in weight and quality, symbolize the twins; they are placed on the spoons. Then crossing her hands, the woman pours them into the basket in which she carries the gifts (4).

4. All the symbolism of gifts made to twins, like that of the double pot (see below), confirms observations made in the Sudan on the relationships between gifts and trade. On this subject, see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, pp. 234 ff. It is interesting to note here that

121 keep its own features only on the native plane on which it was formed and developed.

I have not felt, however, that it was necessary to abandon entirely the French terminology which is familiar to us; it is sufficient to make it fit its new role. Indeed, it would be very difficult to limit oneself to native terms, since it would be awkward and even impossible to find expression in these terms for abstractions which the writer's analysis brings out and of which the native has no knowledge.

A study of custom in its intimate associations thus requires both method and experience if one hopes to arrive at precise facts which have logical interrelationships. The results thus obtained are certainly significant since they show that, perhaps from the very beginning and certainly from a very long time past, the native character follows a path which it has itself chosen and which we can only suspect, rather than observe. This is because the concrete facts which are the landmarks of that history are subject to various interpretations.

177 Today, dislocated by the collapse - thanks to our intervention - of the social framework in which he was developing,
182 the native character is working out new spiritual directives based on its own past, making use of contributions of our civilizations whenever they are in accord with the native's own deepest tendencies. The present-day life of the Black man is merely the reflection of this mystique; hence, whatever may be our wishes in the matter and whatever may be the outward appearances, the Black man continues in all fields to be dominated by his past.

121 This fact would in itself justify a study such as the present one - if there were need for justification - for, in the matter of custom particularly, nothing that has happened in the past is unimportant when both the present and the future are closely and inevitably dependent on this past.

Orthez, February 22, 1923

*173 814 217 212 These, in brief, are the difficulties encountered in dealing with sources for native historical tradition. When Islam introduced [25] a written language, there was created a new category of archivists, the marabouts. They have added this duty to many others; it cannot be proved that they have purged the job of its former vices, but it may be stated categorically that they have added a few new ones.

It is notorious that, in the Sudan, the Moslem traditionists have an ineradicable tendency to transpose everything into their own mentality. Further, since a manuscript gives a kind of quasi definitiveness to the oral tradition, including all its errors, it becomes almost impossible to eliminate these errors because of the unquestioning respect usually accorded a written document.

*173 814 [177] There are also the non-literate Moslem traditionists: ordinary dyeli who have been converted in the usual Sudanese fashion, as described in Chapter 6, and who have abandoned none of the characteristics of their caste. They have merely added a few peculiarities due to Moslem influence.

114 In drawing on these sources, European publications add new reasons for doubt. Most especially, because of a desire -- legitimate, in principle -- to bring some sort of order out of the incoherent mass of traditions, but also because of a need to make them fit a personal theory, the European author takes refuge in an hypothesis. Now there is no objection to this, assuming that the hypothesis on which the author bases his theories is clearly stated. Too often, however, the hypothesis is so well concealed or even so intricately entwined in the tradition that it is impossible either to discover what it is or to set an exact limit to its range. This new metamorphosis of tradition is not the least dangerous for historical truth.

115 *173 It is to two non-literate Moslem dyeli that I am indebted for the traditions concerning the Ségou and Kaarta clans. My interpreter, Souleïman Goundiamou (1), whose services as a

1. Now chief of the village of Ambidédi (Gadiaga).

guide and informant on native matters were invaluable to me, gave

*173
551

1. The name Mamari, among the Bambara, is the equivalent of Mohammed. It is a common given name, even among pagans; the dyeli Karé Tammoura, perhaps because of his own conversion to Islam, used the name Mamari more often than the more common Biton. The cognomen Biton, is a hybrid adopted by the Peul as an equivalent for ton-dem'. The same personage was formerly called fa Tigi-ton', which also indicates Peul influence and which is, on occasion, shortened to fa Tigi, rendered by some who misheard the original as fo Tige and also fo Tinye.

• [177]

*173 increased over his people, Mamari felt the stirrings of ambition grow. The defeat and rout of the people of Doua gave a definite orientation to his projects for domination. However, there was one thing he needed to carry out his plans: an army completely under his control.

As a start toward carrying out his designs, he sent a message to the people of Doukoumna and Banan-koroni, his oldest and most faithful allies, with a request that they send their elders to him on a permanent basis to form a council which he would consult on all appropriate occasions. The elders agreed to remain with him during the dry season, but they insisted on returning home in the winter to look after their own affairs and those of their people.

While these negotiations were proceeding, the young men of Doukoumna and Banan-koroni were fighting around Kirango on Mamari's behalf. When the latter could not overcome the elders' resistance, he resolved to use force (2). He caused a deep well

2. With the assistance of his new partisans, the people of Dina and those from the left bank of the Niger.

776 The third class comprises the enormous throng [redacted]i of all sorts included under the vague and general term of nyana (3).

[177]

3. One also hears the word nyena. I do not think that this is a corruption of the Arab word jinn. In the first place, it was not Islam that introduced the concept to the Bambara, since it is common to all Blacks. Further, the word nyana is connected with a root nya meaning "powerful," "lord," "master," and nyena is only a dialectal variant.

The nyana may be divided into two categories: the [127] wandering and the solitary, for whom no permanent or formal cult is provided. They live pretty much anywhere. Some have a marked preference for being near men, for crossroads or for the vicinity of wells or springs. They also wander, invisible and ready for pranks, in the courtyards of houses where during the night they love to roam among the kitchen-ware. It is said that they put unclean things into the pots unless one has been careful to turn them upside down. It is even said that if any woman is so imprudent as to use a pot in which one of these wandering spirits has urinated, she will give birth to a sorcerer.

Others of these cult-less spirits throng the countryside and are the terror of travelers (1). Everyone has heard of Wokolo: a

1. They can assume any form they like and take part in the life of humans under the most diverse forms. See p. 123 for the horse Kori.

little black, hairy hunter who likes to live in the trees, along the paths and also in the brush, beside creeks. Others say that he likes to live in the si (Bassia Parkii) which we call the butter tree or karite. In any case one cannot escape his sharp arrows except

776 precision of which the native substratum seems unaware. In any event, there is no Bambara word for "God" except the one [177] brought by the Moslems -- "Allah," pronounced as Ngala. This lack of a Bambara word may be explained by their custom of avoiding pronouncing the name of powerful people for fear of incurring their wrath.

[177] There is no superior spirit of evil: Seïtane [Satan] is likewise a Moslem introduction. The Bambara does not visualize a hierarchy of spirits.

776 Finally, it must be concluded, from the existence of many magic practices, that there is a belief in a kind of uni-
778 versal energy, which is diffuse by nature and which, by appropriate
789 means, one can capture and use as one likes. Certain genii or gods are merely emanations of this invisible, imponderable and active force, which no obstacle can stop and which can instantly overcome space and strike at a distance. This is the basis of all native magic.

[129] 2. Morality and Customs

776 When, as among Catholics and Moslems, the after-life is believed to be influenced by one's conduct in this life, there
577 is a rule which determines what is and what is not proper if one wishes to earn the greatest possible rewards in the life to come. The saints and pious men have shown the way to this end.

For the Bambara, however, the next life is merely a continuation of this one and he does not think that he can, by conduct, improve his chances in the next life since it offers no rewards or punishments for his day-by-day actions. Neither his manes nor his genii give him an example of conduct to guide him. Therefore, without thought of the future, he goes along solely concerned with the present; he seeks what will give him pleasure, tries to avoid what seems harmful, and all this in a groping way, as one walks in the dark.

577 Sometimes, it is true, he is led to behave with a degree
626 of decency and to avoid certain too shocking lapses, which would expose him to reproach, alienate his friends and create for him

561
575 association, each fula-ni is a ton'-den'.

The bachelors and some of the married men regard the fla-n-ton' simply as a means of having a good time in the company of boon companions. Anything brought by an individual member goes to swell the common fund which is most often used to organize feasts and drinking bouts. At these banquets, it is customary to comply with rules which appear curious at first sight and which must be obeyed unless the member wants to pay a fine into the common fund. Thus, anyone who acts on his own prior to or contrary to an order from the ton-tigi, anyone who comes or leaves, blows his nose, [250] spits, sneezes, and so on, without permission, is fined. Aside from the profit to the common fund, the procedure has its uses in making the ton-den' amenable to discipline.

In principle, the treasury of the fla-n-ton' is supposed to be used only to succor poor, embarrassed, or unfortunate members, who are expected to repay with interest insofar as they are able to do so. In theory, also, all of the ton-den' can count on moral and material aid from their fla-ni whenever there is need for it. It goes without saying that this fine spirit of altruism is rarely put into practice.

The fact of the matter is that the young masters (kamale-u) make use of the organization to resist the omnipotence of the elders (koro-u); malcontents of all sorts take refuge in it; adventurers find it useful in promoting their schemes. We shall see how the two most powerful Bambara empires were built on the fla-n-ton'.

2. General Considerations Concerning the Brotherhoods

Origin of the Brotherhoods

177
714 There is no reason to suppose that the Bambara brotherhoods are not purely native institutions; similar organizations are to be found all over Africa, particularly in areas untouched by Moslem influence. All of them follow similar principles made manifest in ways characteristic of African occultism.

177
714 There is no doubt, however, that in the case of the Bambara with whom we are here concerned this native foundation

177 794 has acquired various elements brought in from the outside world by Berbers, Arabs, and others, or by Sudanese pilgrims returning from the Orient. In any event, this foreign occultism -- usually oriental -- certainly did not give rise to or greatly modify the local Sudanese occultism; it merely strengthened its organization, its institutions, and its methods by adding new knowledge.

The legend (1) which claims that the nyana of the boli

1. Reported below in the chapter on Islam.

are a Moslem importation does not mean that these "gods" were introduced [251] actually and exclusively by such means. It means only that pre-existing native institutions have received foreign support from pilgrims or others returning or arriving from the Orient.

Dogma

794 Are these brotherhoods based on a more or less secret teaching of cardinal truths? It does not seem to me to be risky to say that they are not. Everything in these cults may be summed up as empirical practices which are believed to have the effect of forcing a "god" (that is, an extranatural force) to serve man. The aim is essentially utilitarian and worldly: to acquire a "powerful protector" (dyigi seme) for defence, for offence, and especially for the purpose of attaining sufficient power for the realization of all desires.

Such an alliance with a god by means of a cult compels one to behave in certain ways, but discipline of this type does not lead to the improvement of either the individual or the society through the acquisition of what we call moral qualities or virtues. It is all the more obvious, then, that the brotherhoods are not trying to assure their members entry into a supernatural world; they can barely claim to assure them protection and a modicum of material well-being. A spiritual mysticism is unknown to them (1).

1. However, see Chapter 7. [Not translated.]

614
567
701
304

incautiously on tattooing as a distinguishing mark of race or even of rank; the tattoo described here has not only been used by people of various origins, but has even been appropriated by all kinds of people as a form of snobbishness.

parallel cuts from temple to lower jaw on either side of the face. Furthermore, these people borrowed the dyamu of the fama (Koulouhali, Dyara, etc.), just as certain servants in some of the French provinces are called by their master's name because they are members of the household bearing that name.

614 701 411 The elite troops (sofa, ton'-dyon', etc.) were armed with axes (sukala) (2). Important chiefs also had axes, the insignia of

2. An instrument's name derived from suka, a variant of sua, meaning "to pierce." The men armed with axes were, in fact, assigned the special task of "making a breach" in the wall inclosing the settlement under attack.

command, sometimes made of precious metal, such as copper or silver. The axe carried by the fama was made of gold and enchased (3).

3. The chronicle relates that Tonmassa, after murdering Dékoro, carried off the golden axe, the symbol of supreme command.

The spear (tama) was often regarded as a weapon of distinction also. The ordinary warriors were armed with bows (kala) and arrows (bimye), the latter usually poisoned.

[177] Guns (marfa) gradually came into use, imported by native traders (Dyula). The chronicle claims that the first firearms were introduced among the people of Ségou in Mamari's time by an army from Kong and that these guns were of the blunderbuss type.

771 came to me to complain that [332] my Negroes were using a 777 satala (1) to take water from his jug.

415 783 177

1. A kind of saucepan made of copper or tin, of European origin, used by Moslem Sudanese for their ritual ablutions.

" 'What difference does that make to you?' I asked him.

" 'What difference does it make!' he answered with an angry air.

"And with that he favored me with the following astonishing line of reasoning:

"'Now you see, I am not a (Moslem) marabout and if the marabouts take water from my jar with the satala, the water that remains in the jar will necessarily be sanctified because it came into contact with that vessel. My children and I drink this water and, since we don't know how to salaam and don't fast, and since we eat pork, God (2) will punish us for having failed

2. That is, in Niany's mind, the nyana called Ngalla (Allah) by the Bambara.

to obey his orders. For, after all, any water that has touched a satala makes a marabout (3) of the person who drinks it. That is

3. That is, an initiate of Ngalla (Allah).

what I heard from my father."

776 The net result is that, on the whole, Ngalla (Allah) is regarded as one of the nyana which we have mentioned and for which the Bambara has a superstitious respect without for that matter being a worshiper. He avoids any contact with all that concerns the nyana, not because of hostility, but for fear of incurring its wrath on account of some impurity. Just as he may call upon any convenient nyana for aid, so he asks the help of

777 Ngalla through his priests, the marabouts. At other times he
787 thinks he will get into Ngalla's good graces by taking part in the great Moslem festivals and by imitating the visible rites (4)

> 4. In the tale of the Hyena, given later, there is an example of this mimicry in the way in which those who follow the Hyena each pretend to be the nyana discovered by the Hyena (see Chapter 7 [not translated]).

of the faithful. He has not the faintest doubt but that he can produce the same effects as they do.

So it is that the pagan, deriving from Islam whatever his own concepts can make use of, "Sudanizes" it in the process. As a result, between the two poles of Islam and paganism, there exists an infinity of intermediate states which link the two and which, depending on the angle of observation, sometimes look like an Islamization of the Sudanese and, at other times, like a Sudanization of Islam.

Father Niany, of the blacksmiths' caste, was one of those [333] individuals who, being versed in the practice of native occultism, consider Islam as a rival Hermetism until the day when they realize that it can provide them with useful new magic power. Many are the blacksmiths, magicians like Niany, who have become Moslems for the purpose of getting their hands on the arsenal of magic which Islam brings into these lands.

787 So it is that all the native brotherhoods have adopted
[777] divination by geomancy which was introduced by the Moslems and there is not a Bambara who does not on occasion consult the geomancer, known as laturudala or kenyelala (1) or the

> 1. Derived from kenye meaning "sand," and la meaning "to place" or "to write on." Therefore it means "the one who writes on the sand."

787 bugurigala (2). These three words are sufficient in themselves
177

2. Derived from buguri meaning "dust," and da meaning "to place" or "to write on." Therefore it means "the one who writes on the dust."

to illustrate the process of Sudanization. Although the first comes from a corruption of the Arabic word el tereb (earth), the other two are strictly Bambara in all respects. Besides, the manner in which the natives have altered the practice of geomancy is an illustration of the same process.

771 It may therefore be concluded that, in certain respects,
797 Islam has strengthened paganism. For example, the pagans commonly believe that an illiterate geomancer, who is nevertheless an expert in this type of divination, will obtain the same results as a learned marabout who is guided by the book of Er Zenati. As a result, a well-known laturadala enjoys special prestige because of the fact that his prognostications are corroborated by a book, and the same fact accounts in part for the influence of the priests of the brotherhoods.

We are thus able to verify the contacts between Islam and the paganism of the Bambara who are the subject of this study.

693 The historical tales related in the foregoing show the continuous relations which existed between the native chiefs and the pious and renowned marabouts. Whenever a legal dispute arose which could not be settled by pagan arbitration, the last recourse was an appeal for judgment or conciliation to a marabout, who was always sought out and greeted with deference. Mamari, Tonmassa, Ngolo and Ma-n-son's sons all had occasion to make such appeals in some most embarrassing situations.

[334] Further, on occasions when they hoped to bring off some questionable deal or to improve their prospects, the chiefs were also wont to call on a marabout. Mamari did so against the Massa-si Foro-koro and so did Ngolo when he was anxious to make sure that his fame would survive him.

In matters of judicial arbitration, it appears that the marabout derives his authority rather more, perhaps, from his

243 manifesting itself too violently and afterwards hold back the receding
312 waters. In the Sahel, the arrangements affect the plains bordering the Niger, where earthen dikes protect the rice from the floods and also control the tributary lakes where they join the river, holding the receding waters in the lakes, thus permitting transplantation of the rice and preventing the subsiding flood from drowning the plants before harvest. From 1944 to 1949, 101,550 hectares were regulated in this manner in the upper valley, the Delta, and the valley of the Sahel.
243 There is a plan to regulate 331,000 new hectares by 1956. In addition, experiments in mechanical tillage have begun. Up until now two methods of cultivation have been applied.

a. Without burning: the hoed land is prepared in furrows 40 to 50 centimeters apart; the seeding is done in seed holes 25 centimeters apart along the furrows. (1)

1. L'agronomie tropicale [Tropical Agronomy], July-August, 1950. [Ed., Revue d'agronomie tropicale, 1951.]

b. With burning: the wild grasses are pulled up in March and April and gathered in beds 1 meter wide and 3 to 6 meters long. They are lightly covered with earth and then set on fire. At the end of June the mounds are turned by hoe, and the seeds planted in holes 30 centimeters apart and 4 centimeters deep. Fifteen grains are put in each hole, or 45 to 50 kilograms per hectare. The yields vary between 800 and 1,200 kilograms of paddy per hectare.

To these basic crops are added the following early carry-over crops:

The millets. Fonio (Digitaria exilis) is cultivated in the region of Senegambia, and iburu (D. Iburna) in the central sector of the Sudan.

Maize and banana trees south of Bamako. Maize is the most widespread crop after millet. Nevertheless, some maize is imported
[351] from Dahomey. Banana trees are planted around the huts and form a belt around the villages. They are also planted in the small fields which border the water courses. Large bananas are harvested which are picked green and cooked.

245 Mango trees, recently imported (about fifty years ago), give
177 an excellent yield and are destined to be developed more and more.

244 The Bambara groundnut ripens its seed underground. It is cultivated from the southern border of the Sahara to the Cape, but its primary home [31] is in the Sudan where the greatest number of cultivated varieties is found. (1)

1. Jacques Félix, for a study on the Bambara groundnut (Voandzeia subterrena), Agriculture tropicale [Tropical Agriculture], January-February, 1950. [Ed., Revue d'agronomie tropicale.]

Manioc and yams at certain points along the Niger escape the devastations of the Acridiidae insects which can not attack their roots.

Other crops are used to balance the diet: condiments and [263] fleshy plants, such as, pimento, sesame, various labiates, okra, [177] sorrel, squash, peanuts (imported in the sixteenth century from America). Peanuts, to thrive, need loose, light soil. They are sown in June at the beginning of the rainy season and are harvested in [252] November. The natives eat them roasted; they make oil and soap from them and give the stalks to their animals. Cultivation is entirely in the hands of the natives. In Senegal manpower is insufficient; [464] before 1940 thousands of Sudanese workers were called upon each [167] season, particularly Bambara, the "Navétanes," who hired themselves out to the farmers of Senegal in order to acquire the textiles and other products they needed. The peanut is an export product. Also cultivated are nitrogenous vegetables (Bambara groundnuts, black-eyed peas, dolichos, kissis, etc.) and the numerous and varied amaranths, tomatoes, eggplants, gourds, and, since 1940, potatoes which are grown more and more.

222 Finally, we will cite: a) the gathering of wild plants which 263 serve as condiments: the fruits of the baobab (Adansonia digitata), of the corchorus, of the Parkia biglobosa [néré], and of the karite tree (Butyrospermum), formerly called the "butter tree," which is cultivated to some degree -- the fruit is something like that of the palm tree and contains a core whose kernels enclose a fatty matter, shea butter, valued for making soap, as an illuminant, for the toilet; 222 b) the gathering of scarcity foods: baobab, cenchrus, cassia, the kola nut (Sterculia acuminata). Kola nuts are much prized by the natives;

248 into narrow bands by weavers [men] who make clothes from it in.
286 unbleached, indigo-blue, yellow, or black fabrics. At the present time, after numerous attempts at improvement since the occupation,
[654] seeds selected according to the zones of cultivation are distributed to the farmers, and the administration encourages industrial cotton cultivation in irrigated regions, as well as mechanical spinning and weaving.

248 Sisal is an agave of Mexican origin. The long, thick, pointed
[177] leaves, after undergoing a series of industrial operations including mechanical extraction of the fibers, yields very strong textile fibers suitable for cordage, rope making, rug manufacture, canopies, etc.

Kapok (Eriodendron anfractuosum) until a few years ago was merely gathered, but now plantations have been created. The fruit is in the form of capsules containing seeds enveloped in a vegetal wadding. In one year the kapok tree can furnish 30 kilograms of fibers used in mattress-making, hat-making ...

D. Agricultural Tools

24 Bambara farming tools are very simple. The hoe is almost the only agricultural instrument used. There are several kinds of hoe, particularly in the Bougouni region: the tyerengu, 0.50 meters wide, with a straight handle (chiefly used by the Sénoufo); the n'gu kala, 0.30 meters wide, with a curved handle. These two are used for digging, scraping, and banking. The flotton, from 0.10 to 0.20 meters wide and with a handle made from a forked branch, is used for the second dressing of the earth and for weeding. (When the weeds are too big, the weeding is done by hand). These hoes oblige the peasant to work stopped over. Let us also mention the axe, dyeli, which serves to cut shrubs and the branches of trees in clearing land, the machete, and a small pickaxe with a hoe handle, the yalo.

[33] Millet spikes are harvested with the aid of a special small knife to cut the stalk into pieces. Finally, the threshing of the ears is done with large bent sticks having round handles and flat ends.

[533] Agricultural labors, tillage and threshing, are undertaken
[461] collectively following the cadence indicated by an instrumentalist. Work in the fields is generally done by starting at the bottom of a slope and working up, so the rain will wash off the weeds. The

114

3. Delafosse, Haut-Sénégal et Niger [Upper Senegal and Niger].

4. Labouret, Les Mandingues et leur langue [The Mandingo and Their Language].

etc., but these are still very fragmentary and incomplete. In addition, this society was completely disrupted by the French conquest, either by such radical measures as the suppression of slavery or by a natural evolution as a result of contact with European societies. Nevertheless, traditional structures retain their vitality, despite the effort to adapt them to European formulas.

The society seems to have oscillated between familial anarchy and the clan stage, according to alternating ranges of groupings, disassociation, and regroupings.

1. The Family

Concerning the Sudanese, Delafosse has already made the distinction between "the restricted family" and the "extended family." The restricted family is composed of the parents and children who live in the "hut.", Taken alone, it does not represent a social unit. The true social cell is the extended family. This is the large united family made up of a group of restricted families whose heads recognize a common ancestor. This group, composed of agnates in principle, is the ba-denya, whose members live in huts within an enclosure: gwa or so. The two ends of this [51] enclosure rest on a blõ (vestibule) where the ancestors' altar is found.

According to Labouret, the Bambara distinguish three categories of family ties: the paternal line, the maternal line, and relationship by marriage. The child takes the dyamu (honorable name) of his father's group, but the terms applied to ancestors and descendants are the same as those of the maternal line.

"... Kinship includes the following generations: tolo-mina... tolo-sama... tolo-ma-sama: who seizes or pulls ears (a belief has it that if a great grandson pulls the ear of his great [825] grandfather, the latter becomes deaf);

692 In matters of justice, the Bambara frequently continue to consult their old tribal judges. It must be noted, however, that in taking away the judicial competence of the old chiefs, the French administration has contributed to diminishing, and almost to completely destroying, their power.

The Bambara had a judicial organization quite as precise and regulated as their religious organization, although there was no codified law, such as the Koran or the Hebrew tables of law. Justice was rendered according to rules which each community passed on from generation to generation. These rules are not of divine origin, but they [69] are sacred nevertheless, for custom is the legacy of the ancestors. The Fama and his council of notables could promulgate new laws, but, before deciding on a new rule, they consult the Komo and the Nyama [an altar]. Then, in the presence of a priest, each one swears on the altar to obey the law which becomes sacred. Moreover, the customary rules cannot be separated from the moral code and the religion to which they are linked. They are not uniform; each canton has its own, and often each village, and within each of these there are observances peculiar to certain families or to certain castes. Nevertheless, the sentiment of fair play is very strong among the Blacks, but they do not admit the equality of men, who are naturally different one from another according to their aptitudes, means, and condition.

Custom regulates all relations between individuals and between individuals and the collectivity.

692 Two sorts of native tribunals existed in the Bambara country: a tribunal of conciliation, presided over by the village chief, who assembled a council of notables; and a high tribunal presided over by the Fama, to whom were submitted the matters which the first tribunal had been unable to settle. In addition, the Fama could call before his tribunal the civil or penal matters which seemed to him to be of importance to the public order.

695 643 Justice was without charge and rendered day and night by the Fama as one of his essential functions, for the judge is the one who repairs the disorders that shake society. The hearings were solemnly conducted and took place under the silk-cotton tree (Ceiba pentandra)

[76] II. Present Evolution of Bambara Society

A. Political Evolution

648 636 At the present time, all the territory of the Sudan is unified and endowed with a political organization permitting it to play an active role within the framework of the French Union. The Sudan, like each of the eight territories of French West Africa, is represented in the National Assembly, in the Senate [Conseil de la République], and in the Assembly of the French Union by elected members. These members have been chosen from among the sons of former slaves or people of caste as well as from among the sons of former chiefs.

The administrative organization is placed under the authority of a governor general, seconded by two councils: the High Council of West Africa and the Government Council. At the head of the territory is a governor who is the administrative chief of the territory; he is assisted by a secretary general, named, like the governor, by decree, and by a civil and military cabinet which transmits the governor's orders.

Finally, the circles are directed by colonial administrators directly responsible to the governor. The circles are divided into subdivisions headed by assistant administrators who are directly responsible to the circle administrators. They are charged with the general administration and control of all the civil and financial functions of the circle.

Each circle is divided into cantons based on the territorial divisions of the old military districts. A canton has a head sometimes named by the administration but generally elected according to the traditional custom of the old Fama. The canton head is charged with representing the interests of the natives before the administration.

B. Tendency to Economic Change

177 The principal transformation in the Bambara economy stems from the French pacification and from the contributions of the European social and economic organization.

a. Urbanization

166 177 369 The Bambara, who are essentially agriculturalists, have no cities. All the cities owe their origin to the Whites and were created for commerce, administration, industry, banking, and education. But the city has exercised the same attraction on the Black peasant as it has on the French one. This taste for city life has been made easier to indulge by the creation of railroads and roads. Cities, such as Bamako, are invaded by ever-increasing populations who leave the bush and the close-knit community to create a de-tribalized mob which adapts more or less well to a European economic organization. Thus, the industrial equipping of Africa tends to transform the native artisanry, because the industrial establishments of the European type require a specialized [77] labor force that will adopt French work methods and economic life. It is in this way that the railroad yards at Thiès were created, as well as the industries of construction in solid materials, the quarries, the brickyards, the limeworks of Bamako, Mopti, and Ségou, and the food industries: icehouses, waterworks, the cotton gins of Koutiala and Sikasso. Industrialization is just beginning in the Bambara country, but the European form of economic organization has spread widely even where native work methods exist, leading, as a result, to economic individualism.

b. Development of Large-scale Agricultural Exploitation

177 241 473 Agricultural exploitation itself has been radically transformed in certain regions. Side by side with food crops which vary according to the needs of the community and which are cultivated in the traditional extensive manner, an intensive monoculture of money crops has developed with peanuts, rice, cotton, etc. This has been made possible by modern techniques of agricultural exploitation: experimental gardens, centers of scientific research, creation of pilot sections, scientific management of the plains. This development has led to the creation of such organizations as the C.G.O.T. in Casamance, a company for diversified economy whose initial capital was underwritten by the State and by professional processors of fatty substances. This company clears and de-stumps the great forest brush with heavy tractors, bulldozers, treedozers, and strumpers [de-stumpers ?] in

177 order to cultivate peanuts, sunflowers, millet, and cotton. Every
241 three years, the company distributes green manure crops in order to
473 reconstitute the soil's humus. Moreover, the company has created veritable villages to house its technicians and the colonists.

177 Other organizations, such as the Niger Office, have charge
241 of the basic water control of the central delta (dams, large canals).
312 Thanks to the creation of a network of waterways, to the clearing
433 and de-stumping of lands, and to the development of general equipment (processing factories, workshops, stores, dwellings, road network), the end of 1949 saw 11,000 hectares of rice fields, with a yield of 18 quintals of paddy and a commercial production of 8,000 metric tons of husked rice. Six thousand hectares have been prepared either for growing cotton (2,000 hectares), for growing rice for food (1,000 hectares), or for lying fallow (3,000 hectares). These fields
[166] permit the exportation of 360 metric tons of cotton fiber. Twenty-two thousand persons have been settled as colonists. Finally, let us note that the F.I.D.E.S. by its financial support has permitted the development of peanut cultivation in Senegal, of rice in Guinea and the Sudan, of karite in Upper Volta, as well as the creation of several technical schools.

c. Social Consequences

177 This technical evolution has profound repercussions on the
596 native way of life. We notice the same change in the Bambara
241 peasant as in the Bambara artisan. The large united family which was [78] the cornerstone of agricultural technique tends to split up more and more, even in the regions where the traditional farming methods are still used. The family field, a great deal less carefully tended than in the past, gives way in importance to the individual's field. Moreover, the family field traditionally was at the end of a path bordered by small individual fields where each peasant went to work for himself before and after the collective labor. Today, we see the creation of individual fields in the brush far from the path which leads from the village to the family field, clearly indicating the desire of the individual to separate himself from the large family and to escape the control of the farming chief in order to realize personal benefits for himself, not subject to family inspection.

177 Finally, the breaking up of the family cell is manifest in the in-
596 creasing number of children who prefer to work as farm laborers far
241 from their home country rather than submit to the tutelage of the farming chief.

177 The economic transformation proceeds due to electrification
377 (regulation of the great falls near Conakry and those of Sotuba near
489 Bamako) and the creation, alongside the old strategic roads, of commercial roads and bridges to facilitate shipping peanuts, rice, cotton, and millet. The ports and wharfs are being put in order, the railroad network being modernized (increasing the matériel, transforming beds and embankments, repairing the tracks, installing and extending yards, improving the depots, constructing stations, buffets, hotels, cheap housing for the employees). On the Niger, improvements are being made in the river ports of Koulikoro, Ségou, Mopti, Bamako, and Gao, and, on the Senegal, of Kayes and Saint-Louis.

177 Finally, the new economy is accompanied by social accomplishments in the fields of health, education, and urbanization.

d. Chambers of Commerce

Thus, two forms of economic organization exist side by side in Bambara country: on the one hand, the traditional and artisan native organization, and, on the other, the European organization which has shattered the ancient society and has put the local economy of the country within the framework of international economy.

177 But it is perhaps in the realm of commerce that the influence
441 of European methods has been most felt, particularly in the creation of Chambers of Commerce, Agriculture and Industry.

The creation of Chambers of Commerce dates from a decree of the Governor General in 1906. Members are elected for four years and are re-eligible. They are elected by an electoral college made up of the chiefs of French or African commercial establishments. The function of these Chambers is to give the administration advice and information when requested on any question of an economic nature.

The Chambers of Agriculture and Industry have substantially the same organization as the Chambers of Commerce, but in addition they are called on by the governors to group and codify the local customs [79] and usages of an agricultural character. These reports serve as the

177 444 basis of judicial decisions, and the Chambers also give advice on the program of agricultural improvement undertaken by the administration and the welfare societies.

In Senegal, there are Chambers of Commerce, Agriculture and Industry at Dakar, Saint-Louis, Thiès, Kaolack, and Ziguinchor; in the Sudan, at Bamako; in Guinea and the Ivory Coast, at Conakry and Abidjan.

e. Work Regulation. Unions

464 Sparsely populated, West Africa lacks manpower. A decree of October 22, 1925, and an order of the Governor General of March 29, 1926, set the conditions by which workers could be recruited and work contracts established: salary, bonus, food, lodgings, medical care ... Individual or collective disputes between employers and employees are taken before arbitration boards presided over by a French employer and a native assistant judge.

464 467 An act of April 2, 1932, regulates the work of women and children. One of March 11, 1937, organizes the trade unions, and a decree of March 20, 1937, the native professional associations. Others regulate collective agreements applying to work. The National Assembly has voted the Overseas Work Code which is beginning to be applied. African unions have developed a great deal in the course of these last years; there are six African unions in the Sudan. The complexity of labor problems has led to the creation at Dakar of an office to inspect manpower problems, this office being attached to the General Bureau of Political, Administrative, and Social Affairs.

[80]

CHAPTER 7

CULTURAL ASPECTS

I. Religion

771 One can never insist too much on the importance of religion. It governs the entire social, political, artistic, and even economic life of the country. No institution can be understood without knowing

D. The New Religions: Islam and Christianity

Alongside this ancestral religion, the Bambara have been exposed to imported religions: Islam and Christianity. The Bambara long resisted the advance of Islam from the Sahara and the cruel Toucouleur domination lasted too briefly to transform a solidly organized religion. But the social evolution provoked by the French conquest has realized what El-Hadj-Omar's conquest could not. The breakdown of the traditional social structures was accompanied by a loosening of religious authority, counterbalanced by the political and administrative authority of the French. Moreover, European educational practices tend to replace the initiation each child received and to turn the children away from the traditional notions. [87] Now, this ignorance and this loss of religious authority are particularly favorable to the diffusion of Islam whose powerful propagandizing is well-known. This diffusion seems to be helped besides by the development of the means of communication, which, on the one hand, aid in separating the young people from the traditional familial authority, and, on the other hand, promote the travel of Dioula and Syrian merchants. All these Mussulmans live in close contact with the population and spread their beliefs, as well as their merchandise, throughout the country. If Islam is constantly on the increase, its practice remains nevertheless superficial and very far from orthodox. Very often it affects only the external forms of the ritual, while the old beliefs and even the traditional sacrifices remain. In addition, the country is still more divided by a certain number of sects, each of which has a Marabout at its head. But the Istiklal constantly attempts, by means of Koran schools directed by Egyptian Mussulmans, to unify this movement which is political as well as religious.

The Christian movement is much less important. In the Sudan it is essentially Catholic; missions are created in the bush and in certain centers, but they are still very few and far between. However, the creation of a Black clergy permits easier contacts with the population. The principal centers of the Catholic cult in the Sudan are at Bamako, the residence of the apostolic vicar, at Kati, Ouolosebougou (Bamako circle), Béléko (Diaila subdivision), Gualala (Yanfolila circle), Kayes, an apostolic prefecture with two churches, at Kakoulou (Kayes circle), Kita (White fathers and sisters of Our Lady of Africa), Karangasso

291 designs. European influence has naturally made itself felt in the
[177] fashions, and European thread is replacing native cotton thread, but the color symbolism in the bands is retained. Even though European fabrics invade the markets more and more, the traditional clothes remain the most sought after, although they have undergone certain modifications inspired by European fashions even while remaining very original.

291 Although the Bambara go barefoot, in certain circumstances
531 they make ornamented clogs to give to the new bride. These sandals
585 are decorated with geometric designs, engraved with a hot iron by the blacksmith, that symbolize the twinship, the multiplication of children, the parents, the husband's family, the couple's language, and the sealing of the association. These signs are encircled by the sign of the union of the whole. Also, the whole ritual of taking possession lasts for several days.

302 Coiffure. At the present time, the adult males no longer wear the traditional coiffure consisting of two plaits at the side, but the children still have their hair shaved and braided according to custom. Thus, the uncircumcised boys wear a crest of hair going from the forehead to the nape of the neck, while the rest of the head is shaved. The crest symbolizes the [99] divine serpent. The children of blacksmiths also wear, at the sides of the head, two circles of hair which are cut by lines representing the forge. When a child is born after the death of several brothers and sisters, only half of his head is shaved in mockery, so that the dya subject to this pretended neglect will decide to stay in the child. The children of Marabouts have their hair shaved in such a manner that it forms a spiral which starts in the middle of the skull and covers the whole head. Afterwards, bands of hair are shaved in a manner to trace a cross on this spiral. The little girls wear a small braid across the forehead, falling on the left side, while married women wear a braid at each side of the head. These braids are made by adding fibers of the da, shining with karite, plaited with the hair. Finally, the women wear
301 22 gold rings at the ears, images of the 22 primordial elements, or sometimes a single large ring in the form of a crescent closed by threads of red cotton, which is a résumé of the 22 others. These rings keep impure words from the ear, which plays an important
[176] role in generation; it is through the ornamentation that the spirits hear what is said to man.

342 of the hut is traced; around this, four large bamboo stakes are erected which are all tied together at one end with a fiber rope. A large stone is placed on top of the pyramid to weigh on the stakes and keep them properly apart. Near the top, two bamboo strips are tied around the four stakes, one on the outside and the other on the inside: this is the midio. Other stakes are slipped between the four principal ones and are attached to the double hoop. Equally spaced, [101] seven or eight other circles are tied on, descending toward the base of the cone. For covering the roof, straw of tji le, very thin and white, is chosen, which will be the most rainproof, or else straw of black uro-ba-bi, "hyena grass", coarser and less esteemed. A layer of straw is spread on, attached to the top, and sewed to the first two circles. A third hoop placed over the two others keeps the straw in place. Then a second row is put on and sewed to the last hoop, at ground level. The succeeding rows then are laid from the bottom up to the top in such a manner that they partially cover each other. When the bottom row has been sewed, the roof is lifted, and a small child slips inside to pull in the bamboo needle used to sew the straw to the hoops. When the roof is entirely sewed, a man climbs up, knocks the stone off the top, and takes its place. He slips a hoop made of six bamboo strips over the first three hoops of the roof, attaching it with the aid of two crossed sticks that pierce the roof. He gathers the straw at the top between the ends of the four stakes which are sticking out and knots and plaits it "like a woman's hair." If the roof is to cover a woman's hut, this is not done, but the straw which sticks out is folded down and held by the first hoop. Finally, from 15 to 30 young men assemble and lift the roof onto the hut.

At the present time, walls of basketwork and banco are replaced by walls made of molded banco bricks, dried in the sun.

Rectangular or square hut. This form is of recent importation [177] in the Bamako and Bougouni circles; it is frequently found starting at Ségou and up to the Sahel.

This type is constructed with dried bricks. When the roof is flat, it rests on forked wooden posts that are planted in the ground or that stand on big flat stones. There are five, seven, or nine of these posts, including a central one. Beams are placed in the forks; joists go across the supports. The whole is covered with matting which is packed with a layer of banco mixed with karite butter or with nere flour. The roof is constructed with a slight incline to let the water run off, and it is tamped with the bumbuli, a sort of wooden

545
744
522

Example:
Tiekoroba kolili (the old man who has nothing)
Ita rokina momindi (what you say is not liked)
Ida konieti aie (you are right)
N'ka idia dopina marmandi (but one doesn't like what you say)
Or again:
Demise fentili (the rich young man)
Ida dokma kakadi (one likes what you say)
Ida konie tinaie (what you say is not true)
N'ka idia dokma makadi (but one likes what you say)

545
534
744

The Kworeduga have the su (Moor) as taboo, and they accompany themselves in singing with a sacred gourd, yaraba, which contains seeds of Lufa cilindrica.

536
881

Finally, during the circumcision initiation period for example, the child learns the sacred dances which often mime exploits of the mythical ancestors.

177
517

A certain evolution characterizes the native art which has been transformed in a curious fashion by contact with Europeans. In European centers, prolonged contact with the Whites has confused the beliefs that inspired the art, but the artists have lost neither their taste nor their gifts. At the request of the Whites themselves, they have undertaken a controlled art, with the aim of pleasing the Europeans. Needless to say, even if it conserves some charm in its form, all this new art, which evolves with the same swift rhythm as our modes, remains terribly dead, for the true source of inspiration has dried up. This art no longer seeks to be true, but to be pretty; by this it signs its own death warrant.

[109]

CONCLUSION

I. Traditional Interpretation of Mental Characteristics

181

In the introduction to Religion Bambara, Tauxier insists on the mental characteristics: "The Bambara has remained rather openly fetishist"; he possesses "two dominant traits, which are absolutely undisputed and indisputable:

"1. He is a very good farmer.

772 776 The saraka is the Bambara's only direct religious act toward their Creator and sovereign Lord. Although it is often performed and presented in the corner formed by two paths that fork or cross, it may be given anywhere, and I was right in saying that the Bambara God remains without priest, altar or sacrifice, and, strictly speaking, without worship.

776 777 3. The Bambara Belief in God is not of Islamic Origin any more than are their Ideas on Heaven, Hell, and the World of Invisible Beings (1)

1. Cf. J. Brun of the White Fathers, "Notes sur les Croyances et les Pratiques religieuses des Malinkés fétishistes /Notes on the Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Malinke Fetishists/," Anthropos, II, pp. 952-954.

772 776 177 Bambara notions of God, heaven and hell, and the world of invisible beings conform so closely to the teachings of the Koran, that we ask ourselves first of all if they were not received from the Moslems. Our surprise increases even more when we begin to study these people, for with respect to religion the only terms in which they can express themselves in present-day language are purely and exclusively Arabic. This is a fact, and the similarity is very easy to establish.

The angels -- Bambara méléké, Arabic mala'ika ملائكة -- are spirits -- Bambara hakili, Arabic 'aqal عقل --, superior to the genii -- Bambara djiné, Arabic el-djin الجن --, beings intermediate between men and angels and to whom God has entrusted the custody of the elements. The good angels are in paradise -- Bambara ardjana, Arabic El-djanna الجنة -- up there in the blue sky and constitute the heavenly court of the Creator and sovereign Lord of all things, God -- Bambara Alla, Arabic Allah الله --, the cause of good and evil. God rules seven heavens and seven terrestrial globes placed one above the other and the wicked angels

772 -- Bambara sétané, Arabic chéitane شَيْطَان -- are at open war with
776 Him; rooted in evil, powerful, and capable of harming and oppressing
177 human beings. They must nevertheless undergo eternal punishments
in hell -- Bambara djahanéma /67/, Arabic djahannam جَهَنَّم --
in a fire compared to which, says the legend, ours would be only the
little that would remain after seven consecutive washings with large
quantities of water.

As this cursory glance indicates, both concept and words are strictly from the Koran. Can it be doubted that the Negro was taught all this by the Moslem? I have lived too long among the Negroes to take appearance for reality, and here once again I am wary of accepting the statements of our learned "travelers."

177 For centuries now, Islam has penetrated into the heart of Africa
181 and established itself in the midst of our Negro peoples; slow as its advance has been, it has not failed to leave its mark. The Bambara, the most important kernel of the Mande peoples, was always at war against the Moslem to safeguard his independence and the faith of his fathers (the wars were primarily religious). They were in turn conqueror and conquered, but most often conquered (for the Bambara, egoistic, plan their personal and individual interests before that of the group, and they always lacked cohesion and agreement, and never really had a leader at the top); they could not escape. Since they are nevertheless essentially deceitful, crafty, and hypocritical so that other peoples compare them to a piece of cow dung, dry outside but soft and loose inside so that it breaks and soils one as soon as a foot is placed on it -- and this comparison pleases them -- I do not hesitate to say that they took nothing from Islam that was not already in their minds. If they have taken Arabic terms to express themselves, I cannot doubt that this was purely diplomacy on their part. The use of Arabic terms that correspond to their own ideas in order to express their beliefs in present-day language represented adaptation and in no sense acceptance on their part. I would even assert that here they gave evidence, not of tact towards their conqueror (this is a quality which at the present time they do not possess even in an embryonic form), but of a certain pliability and shrewdness. In fact, by appearing before their tyrant on an equal footing with respect to dogma, they

177 avoided the stroke of the sword or slavery, kept their faith in fetishes
181 intact, and shielded both themselves and their /68/ children from all religious propaganda -- for what was there to teach them, what could they be taught that they did not know already?

177 The terms from the Koran have become familiar to them in
192 present-day language. Since they do not come from them and express primarily a concept rather than the thing itself, they have been able to use them with complete freedom, without failing in the respect due to the superior beings, their lords and gods, whose names are never spoken in vain or in an unsuitable name. Nowadays the words have become so Bambara that the people do not even suspect that they are foreign to their language, and have no cause to be surprised at them. The Bambara make anything their own that they feel translates their thought precisely, without giving much attention to the original meaning of the word, which they often do not know. Having
[576] heard the Moslem repeatedly cry out bismilahi, they thought it in good taste to make this exclamation in the anecdotes and stories that they tell, and for two or three years this has been the super-polite expression in "smart" society for inviting a guest to enter a hut and squat on the mat. In twenty years this word bismilahi بسم الله will have no other meaning! Even though it means "in the name of God," you would be laughed at if you were heard to say that it is an Arabic word with quite another meaning, just as you would waste your time telling a Negro that the expression "fou moi le camp" /"get out of here," literally "give me the camp."/ is plain /French/ slang. When a slave escapes, does one not say, "a bi fou moi (1) le camp?"

1. a: "he," bi: "is," fou moi le camp; the whole expression: "to desert."

It is a widely used expression known by everyone and is teamed with this other: ze ma fo, about which I pondered for several days, seeking to find its meaning. Yet nothing could be simpler; it is "I don't give a rap." /From the French je m'en fous/.

114

Ma n'zira ba, etc., does not mean "great baobab of man." The real meaning is: "O man who is a great baobab." In writing it I prefer a "z" to an "a." Usually the Bambara soften the hard sound by a euphonious little "n." With a hard "s" the word sira cannot be distinguished from the word "tobacco": sira siramougou, "snuff tobacco"; n'ziremougou, "baobab flour."

[194]

776 a purely Bambara term to express their idea /of these spirits/, and
782 they to the word djiné; they call them gnéna.

Before the arrival of the Moslems, the Negro sacrificed to beings
776 to whom they have attributed bodies and souls, although imponderable
782 and invisible, who are intermediate between men and angels and whom
177 the Arabs call الجن el djiné. But they also sacrificed to evil
798 beings, superior to the former in power, whom they call boli. The legend of the boli, an ironic legend which I will tell in full when I discuss this matter, is sufficient proof of this belief. For the Moslems of the Sudan only two things here below /70/ are worthy of attention: Mecca (Makka) and Stamboul -- old Abdul Hamid, Sultan of Constantinople -- who in their eyes, as in the eyes of all Moslems of our colonies, is the great Pope of Islam. Everything that does not bear the stamp of Mecca, everything that does not come from Stamboul, is to be rejected and scorned. Thus the Bambara, fertile in expedients, quickly managed to find a way out of their discussions with the propagators of Islam: "All our boli come from Mecca," was their weapon of war.

776 The Bambara were pursued from every side, unable to perform
177 publicly even religious ceremonies in honor of simple genii. Can
798 one believe that they added others that were still more terrible? As conquerors the Moslems have always ruthlessly opposed idolatry, destroying its temples and overthrowing its altars. "Believe or die" has always been their motto and always will be as long as they feel

776 strong. Is it not a fact that this law still operated forcefully at the
●177 time of the last kings of Segou, when El-Hadj-Omar (1) took the
798

1. El-Hadj-Omar ("Omar the Pilgrim"), so named because, it is said, he made the journey to Mecca.

crown from the pagan king Mary to give it to his son Ahmadou (2)?

2. Bambara translation of the word Ahmed.

It was Ahmadou who held captive our explorers Mage and Quintin, and at the death of his father he left for Yamina and then for Nioro, leaving the crown to his son Madani. For those Bambara who were incautious, whose fetishes were seized, or who were caught sacrificing, the consequences were the confiscation of possessions, imprisonment, slavery, and death. The huge area where the native cemetery and
[764] the European cemetery (3) are found at present was soaked with the

3. There are two European cemeteries at Ségou. The first is at the entrance of the city on the south side. The second, the only one in which burial takes place at present, is on the edge of the native cemetery, south on the road from Sens and Koutiala, about 300 or 400 meters from the city.

blood of pagans. Who will ever know how many heads rolled at that time for a purely religious purpose! On some days the arm of the executioner stopped only because it was tired and unable to strike -- so I was told by some Negroes who owed their /71/ lives to this fatigue. And I believe them, for the greatest praise that the story-tellers /griots/ accord these tyrants is that they knew how to cut off heads. The legend that the boli came from Mecca was born inevitably

776 177 198 out of the Bambara's need to soften their crime of idolatry and to preserve it by lending it extenuating circumstances. If the cradle of Islam is Mecca, if its superiority is derived from the holiness of that city, chosen and beloved by God (1), what can the Moslems want of

1. See what I said above on the subject of Mecca and Stamboul.

him, the Bambara, whose religion comes from this same much vaunted city? And if the God of Whom the Moslems preached to the Bambara has decreed everything (2), good and evil, if He is the Author of both

2. See the Koran: VI, v. 3 - 39; X, v. 99; XIV, v. 4; XVII, v. 32; XXXVI, v. 6, 7, 8, 9; LIII, v. 43, 44, 45 - 49; LXXVI, v. 29; LXXX, v. 29; etc.

good and evil and leads each person along the course that pleases Him to such a degree that he no longer has freedom of choice, why wish to take from them that which God has given them, that which comes to them from the holy city of Mecca!

776 796 782 [192] The Bambara term for the boli is gna. Their idea of them corresponds closely to the Arab concept of the chéitane شيطان, and in everyday language, they define them by a single word: sétané, "satan," even though this word is never on their lips in the sacrifices. In their nocturnal orgies and religious dances, the Negroes" notion of the genie to which they are sacrificing are shown in concrete form. And when, in their religious ceremonies in honor of the Komo, Kono, [178] Nama, etc., the spirit appears by the glow of little fires lit in the sacred woods, decked out in a cloak of feathers, his head hidden in a huge horned mask that has nothing human about it, one cannot help 776 796 thinking of the tales of old Breton grandmothers, told on a winter evening in the stables. The blasting of trumpets, bamboos, and koba 534 782 horns (3), the tinkling of /72/ the little bell, and the shouts of the

776 If on this earth the smallest of rulers, the least of potentates, is surrounded by servants and slaves, could the Creator be without them? If those who form the court of a king are superior to the gouatigi, or "family heads," to the dougoutigi, or "village heads," and to the kafotigi, or "heads of cantons," would those who form the celestial court be inferior to men, to genii, or to demons? The conclusion is perfectly natural; they would be superior to the latter, and to what will he /the Bambara/ compare them? Since they always in every way use themselves as a basis for comparison, they have only to think of themselves in order to remain logical in their conception of the world and to attribute to these beings the nature of their souls, their dousou, which they also call son. Is this not what they have done? When the Bambara define their idea of the soul and want to be understood, have they any other word than this very one, méléké, which they use to designate the angels? It is clear that they do not owe their concept [177] of heaven and the angels to the Moslems; they have appropriated from a foreign language a word which corresponded to a concept they already had, and that is all.

776 However, I am told that they have only one word to designate
177 the Divinity, the Only God, and that word is the Islamic term itself,
192 Alla. They have no other, and the first missionaries, doubtless
196 through ignorance of the pagans' hatred of the Moslems, adopted it, thus creating a hindrance to their ministry (1). Yes, Alla is the term

197 1. By translating as Alla both God and our concept of the Divinity, the first missionaries failed to establish the profound division which should exist between Catholicism and Islamism. The pagans regard the Catholic and the Moslem, as cousins, if not as brothers, and the word Alla is not irrelevant to this view. Because the Catholics believe in the Old Testament, they seem in the eyes of the Negro to border on Islamism, and the departure from it into Christianity

197

seems to them like membership in a sect derived directly from Islamism. The Moslems help with all their might to further belief in this nonsense. Therefore the missionaries should delete from their catechisms the word Alla for "God," as well as the ridiculous word mori for "priest," the word néma for "grace," etc., etc. -- in a word, all that is not Bambara.

176 they use in everyday language when they speak of God, but in the be-
177 ginning did they not have another, and do they not still have one at
192 present? /76/
196 I have always been surprised at the Negro's readiness to call a divine blessing by the name of its Author, and when in the winter he receives the blessing of blessings, the rain that makes plants sprout and the harvest grow, this is the way he expresses himself: "Alla bi fign, Alla bi na, Alla bi kouloukoulou, Alla bi yégé yégé, Alla do, etc., God darkens, God comes, God rumbles, God flashes, it is God," etc. These are purely metaphoric expressions, which mean: "The clouds gather; it will rain; the thunder rumbles; there are flashes of lightning, it is the rain."

I have found these metaphors on their lips also with exactly the same meaning but this time in Bambara words: "Sa bi fign, sa bi na, sa bi kouloukoulou, sa bi yégé yégé, sa do," the meaning is likewise: "The clouds gather; it will rain; the thunder rumbles; there are flashes of lightning; it is the rain." The word sa is strictly Bambara and so cannot reasonably be regarded as more recent than the Arab word; the Negroes therefore had it before they knew the word Alla. The word did not mean "cloud," "thunder," "lightning," or "rain," and there is every reason to believe that there was a time when it awakened in their minds a concept identical with that which the word Alla awakens in them at present, and that this word Alla from a foreign language is only used to express a concept long held by them.

111 The better one knows the Bambara, the more one studies their
177 beliefs in the light of their practices, considering them from their own way of thinking, seeing, feeling, and envisaging things, the more one is convinced that they owe none of their concepts to the Moslems. They have only taken from their conquerors certain words /82/ from the Koran, and these they have adopted to express themselves. They are words which corresponded to their ideas and which, being foreign to their language, remained terms that conceal.

112 It is a curious and surprising fact that certain Moslem truths
177 suited to make an impression on their minds, such as hell, paradise, the judgment of the soul followed by reward or punishment, the end of the world, etc., have always left them cold and indifferent. Had they, perhaps, lost this concept by the time of the Moslems' arrival so that all this was new to him?

112 What does hell matter to the Bambara! Should they fear this consuming fire compared to which ours would be only the remains from a seventh washing (1)? To begin with, they believe in the reincarnation

1. Definition of hell: A douga ko wolonoula, min bi to a wolonoula ko, an tassouma flé nin yé, literally: "it to extinguish washing seventh that which is left to it seventh (washing) after our fire, look, that is it."

of souls, and this belief protects them from all these tortures, and if some Negroes think of hell, they think of it without trembling. To deserve it, one must insult the gnéna or djiné, or the gnâ (boli, sétané), or be a monster to the point of denying all the laws of justice and hospitality. The occasions for sacrificing to the gnéna and to the gnâ are too frequent always to go unnoticed, their fears of the fetishes are too numerous for anyone continuously to refuse the hen and the kola nut to the invisible tyrants. And is there any monster here below whose heart is not at one time or another moved, touched, or seized with compassion for the weak? Where is the rough, rude being who is ashamed to offer a glass of water to the passing traveler or, even